DEQ in the Classroom:

Making a Mini-Landfill

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Grade Level:

4th - 6th Grades

Objective:

To have students examine the materials that comprise the products they use, describe whether these materials are renewable or nonrenewable resources, and observe what happens to materials when placed in a landfill and decide whether they could be disposed of in a different way.

Focus:

The average person generates between three and four pounds of trash each day. Much of this material can be recycled and reused, saving landfill space and protecting our natural resources.

Materials:

- ✓ Four large, clear-glass jars
- ✓ Soil
- ✓ Miscellaneous solid waste
- ✓ Crayons
- ✓ Masking tape

Procedures:

Choose one item you threw away today. Answer the following questions:

1. What is your item made of?
2. Into which of the following four categories of solid waste does your item fit:
   a) organic (e.g. potato peels)
   b) renewable resource/recyclable (e.g. newspaper)
   c) nonrenewable resource/recyclable (e.g. aluminum cans)
   d) nonrenewable resource/hard to recycle (e.g. plastic toothpaste tube)?
3. What happened to the item you threw away?
4. What is a landfill?
5. How might the material that a piece of trash is made of determine how you should dispose of it?
6. List ways you can avoid disposing of your item in a landfill.

7. If your goal were to save natural resources and reduce solid waste, from which category (a-d) would you buy products? Which category would you avoid?

With crayons and masking tape, label each glass jar with one of the four category headings. Fill each jar about half full with soil. Sort each miscellaneous solid waste item into its proper category (a-d). Put a small sample of each item into the jar with the corresponding label. Cover with soil. Leave the lid off and place the jar on a shelf away from people and out of direct sun. Predict what you think will happen to the solid waste in each jar. Record your predictions. Observe and record what changes occur, if any, during a 2-3 week period,.

Acknowledgements:
B'Ann Beam, Stephen F. Austin State University TES course, 1994.
Recycling Study Guide, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, Madison, WI 53707, PUBL-IE-020, January 1988.
Texas Natural Resource Conservation Commission. November 1995.